

Meeting Summary
Worker's Compensation Advisory Committee -Subcommittee on Health Care
October 17, 2005

Participants

Labor:	Owen Linch, Robby Stern and Ed Wood
Business:	Amber Carter (via telephone), Vickie Gore and Beverly Simmons
Board of Industrial Appeals:	Tom Egan
L&I:	Gary Franklin, Roy Plaeger-Brockway, Bob Mootz, Diana Drylie, Susan Campbell, Lee Glass and Dave Overby
UW:	Tom Wickizer, Deb Fulton-Kehoe and Terri Smith-Weller
Renton COHE:	Pat Vincent, Karen Nilson, and Holly Stuermann
Spokane COHE:	Dan Hansen and Pam Cromer
Guests:	Sally Reuter

Introductions and minutes – Gary Franklin welcomed the group and asked for any comments on the minutes from the July 2005 meeting. There were no changes suggested.

Quality Indicators for Orthopedists – Gary presented information on a recent focus group with orthopedists and neurosurgeons focused on developing quality indicators. There was a lot of interest in COHEs and the COHE process; however most surgeries are after the 90 day COHE intervention time period. There will be more on this project at the next WCAC-HC meeting.

Selected questions/issues raised by Committee members (answer by Gary):

- ❖ **Does this mean that we are inching toward expanding the role of the COHEs beyond the 12 weeks? There is some logic in this.**
 - This may be something to look at in the future.

Eastern Washington COHE Expansion – Dan Hansen of the Eastern Washington Center of Occupational Health and Education presented slides on the expansion which began with the new biennium on July 1, 2005. The COHE is recruiting providers in the new counties, focusing on Yakima County and Wenatchee providers. The Yakima Initiative Group will become an informal advisory group to the COHE, under the auspices of the Business/Labor Advisory Board. A similar advisory group is forming in Wenatchee.

Selected questions/issues raised by Committee members (answers by Dan Hansen):

- ❖ **Are there any Business/Labor Advisory Board members from Yakima County yet?**
 - Not yet. The Eastern Washington Business/Labor Advisory Board created four new voting positions. These will be filled by one business and one labor representative from Yakima County, as well as one business and one labor representative from the other new counties.
- ❖ **Why are lawyers involved in the Advisory Groups? They bring in political issues.**
 - In Yakima, the lawyer was involved in the Initiative Group, which has been meeting for several years. In Wenatchee, the lawyer involved is a civic leader and appears to be involved for that reason.
- ❖ **The NW Justice Project in Wenatchee should be involved. They see a lot of farm worker cases. Robby Stern will get information on them to Dan. Bev Simmons disagreed and feels that lawyers should not be in the advisory group(s).**

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Request for Information – Susan Campbell presented the timeline for the Request for Information and development of the seed communities. L&I will be giving presentations to interested communities, including Vancouver, Tukwila, Everett, Kennewick, and Tumwater in October and November.

- The seed communities are a way to begin expansion, but to do it slowly and carefully, since we do not yet have the results from the Eastern Washington COHE. The money provided to the seed communities will allow them to begin developing some of the COHE components. Communities have a possibility of continued funding if their project is successful.

COHE Components – Diana Drylie presented the essential components of the COHEs for review and comment. The three components are 1) occupational health best practices, 2) community involvement, and 3) information systems. Subcommittee members agreed that these are the key components.

Selected questions/issues raised by Committee members:

- ❖ **Business representatives pointed out that we still do not know exactly what is working. It may be early interventions; it may be changing provider practices. Do we know that doctors are improving? They would like these questions looked at.**

UW Research in the Future – Roy Plaeger-Brockway led a discussion on the future of the evaluation and UW research. (See attached slides). Currently planned research includes –

- Additional analysis for each COHE of one more year of claims
- Follow-up worker surveys (18 months after injury)

Ideas for the 07-09 biennium

- A) Results of Eastern WA COHE for counties added in 2005-06
- B) Comparison of Eastern WA COHE with urban areas
- C) Determine whether COHEs can be replicated
- D) Improved knowledge of what makes COHEs effective
- E) Better understanding of what improves adoption of occupational health best practices
- F) What might improve the effectiveness of COHEs?
- G) Longer-term follow-up results

Tom Wickizer pointed out that the combined report, due in December 2006, can do a detailed analysis of the data from both COHEs and drill down to which components may have been the most important.

Selected questions/issues raised by Committee members:

- ❖ **What can we say about clinical best practices, in addition to process improvements?**
 - Gary answered – It appears that diagnosing carpal tunnel right away makes a big difference. Other issues on the medical side may be something to look at in the future.

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- ❖ **Is there a difference in partial permanent disability (PPD) in COHE versus non-COHE?**
 - This question has not been addressed yet.
- ❖ **To what degree is the COHE approach able to be generalized to health care that is not workers' compensation?**
 - Tom answered – We do not yet know if our results can be generalized. The research, up to this point, was not designed to answer that question.

Role of Physician Assistants (PAs) – Pat Vincent explained that PAs have a large role in emergency rooms and urgent care clinics, with a lot of autonomy. There has been a continued concern that PAs do not get paid the enhanced fees that are part of COHE. **The group agreed that PAs can become attending providers in the COHE project. They will get paid 90% of the enhanced rate for COHE (as they get paid 90% for all L&I fees). They need to practice within the current law.**

There is a study mandated by the legislature on the role of ARNPs and PAs which will be done by the 2007 session. The study will address the implementation of the law passed in 2004, allowing PAs and ARNPs expanded roles in the workers' compensation system, including the effects of this change on injured worker outcomes, claim costs, and disputed claims.

NEXT MEETING

- **Monday, March 20 – 9:00 am -12:00 noon, Tukwila Training Room**

Agenda of the spring and summer WCAC-HC meetings will include more discussion of research, budget issues and strategic planning, as well as an update on the orthopedic surgery quality indicators.

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Roy Plaeger-Brockway's slides

Future Research Plans – Centers of Occupational Health & Education

Topics

- **Current Evaluation Research**
- **Possible Future Research**
- **Strategic Planning**
- **Budget Planning**
- **Future Agendas for WCAC-HC**

L&I-UW Contracted Research

- **Already funded for the current 05-07 biennium**
- **Due by June 2006 and 2007**
- **University of Washington Research Team**
 - **Joint planning and consultation with L&I**
 - **Evaluation progress updates at WCAC-HC**
 - **Results of Eastern WA COHE**
 - **Combined results of both COHEs**

Possible Future Research

- **Ideas for the 07-09 biennium**
 - **A) Results of Eastern WA COHE for counties added in 2005-06**
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 - **G) Longer-term follow-up results**

HC Subcommittee Discussions

- **Spring 2006 Agenda**
 - **Update on Eastern WA COHE evaluation**
 - **Discuss research plans for 07-09 biennium**
 - **Preliminary budget for 07-09**
- **Summer 2006 Agenda**
 - **Report results for Eastern WA COHE**
 - **Strategic planning for 07-09 and beyond**
 - **Final budget proposal for 07-09**